Stephen Reeves 9/1/10

Summary wrt105

“Reassigning Meaning”, by Simi Lipton, makes the reader aware of terms that describe the disabled and why those terms are proper or demeaning. Lipton begins with the term ableism. Ableism is a term used to “organize ideas about the centering and domination of the nondisabled.”(pg. 223). Ableism, however, was defined in the Reader’s Digest Oxford Word Finder as “discrimination in favor of the able-bodied.” (pg. 223). Lipton continues to say that ableism can be just as discriminatory as racism and sexism. The expression “disabled people” is the most common amongst disability rights activists. This expression has its benefits for the disabled community. For example, due to its medical definition more advances in science and technology has been developed in order to help the disabled and help prevent diseases. The down side to this expression is that the term “disability” has become a characteristic marker rather than a secondary or tertiary characteristic. Lipton went on to describe “good” words to use when describing a disabled person and also the “nasty” words to use. She wrote that words like “physically challenged, able disabled, and handicapable” (pg. 226) were good words to use. Words like “cripple, vegetable, dumb, and deformed” (pg. 227), are considered “nasty” words to use and were degrading to people with disabilities. Lipton strongly believed that everywhere should be handicap friendly to some degree. She believed that “if we, as a society, place the onus on individuals with disabilities to work harder to ‘compensate’ for their disabilities or to ‘overcome’ their condition or the barriers in the environment, we have no need for civil rights or affirmative action.”(pg. 229).

Many disabled people are considered “abnormal” by society. Lipton explains that there is no actual normal or abnormal society. Society makes up descriptions that fit wanted criteria, such as tall and smart. People with disabilities pass through different barriers every day. The hardest barrier to get past, however, is society. When a society becomes acclimated to terms such as disabled or abnormal it becomes more difficult to overcome adversity.